

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-12
TRSE-00 OMB-01 SSM-03 HA-05 /094 W
-----082280 191642Z /45

O R 191544Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2691
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USMISSION USUN NY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E. O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PDEV PBOR IS
SUBJ: CHANGE IN SETTLEMENT DECISION-MAKING

REFS: (A) TEL AVIV 4934, (B) TEL AVIV 2862

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. HAARETZ (LITANI) REPORTED THAT
DECISIONS ON SETTLEMENT BEYOND THE GREEN LINE ARE
NOW BEING MADE BY THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON
SECURITY AFFAIRS HEADED BY BEGIN. UNTIL NOW THE
FULL CABINET HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE APPROVAL
OF NEW SETTLEMENTS AND THE MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT
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COMMITTEE HEADED BY SHARON HAD DEALT WITH THE OTHER
ASPECTS OF SETTLEMENT. THIS SHIFT IN AUTHORITY IS
BEGIN'S METHOD OF ENSURING THAT DECISIONS ON
SETTLEMENT ARE MADE AT THE HIGHEST GOVERNMENT LEVEL
AND AVOIDING A REPETITION OF LAST MONTH'S INTER-
MINISTERIAL SQUABBLES OVER SETTLEMENT POLICY.
MEANWHILE, WASHINGTON-BASED ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS,

NOTING GROUND DEVELOPMENT WORK AT NABI SALAH ON THE WEST BANK AND PLANS FOR A POPULATION INCREASE IN THE SETTLEMENTS IN NORTHERN SINAI, STATED THAT THE US ADMINISTRATION IS FOLLOWING CONTINUING SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY WITH CONCERN. THE JERUSALEM POST REPORTED THAT THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN ASKED TO CLARIFY THE SITUATION AT NABI SALAH AND YAMIT, WHILE HAARETZ ASSUMES THE USG WILL REQUEST ISRAEL THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS TO MAINTAIN THE SETTLEMENT FREEZE. END SUMMARY

2. ACCORDING TO HAARETZ (LITANI), ALL DECISIONS CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SETTLEMENTS BEYOND THE GREEN LINE, AS WELL AS THE DATE OF SETTLING AND THE EXPANSION OF EXISTING SETTLEMENTS, WILL NOW BE MADE BY THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FOR SECURITY AFFAIRS. THIS CHANGE WAS RECENTLY MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S INITIATIVE AND WITH THE SUPPORT OF A CABINET MAJORITY. UNTIL NOW, THE FULL CABINET HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SETTLEMENTS BEYOND THE GREEN LINE AND THE MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE HEADED BY SHARON HAD DEALT WITH THE REMAINING ASPECTS OF SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY. LITANI REPORTED THAT A "SENIOR GOVERNMENT SOURCE" TERMED THE CHANGE A CLIPPING OF SHARON'S AUTHORITY IN SETTLEMENT AFFAIRS. ALTHOUGH THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPOKESMAN, DAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PATTIR, IS ISSUING A STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT SHARON'S AUTHORITY HAS NOT BEEN LIMITED, LITANI CONFIDED TO EMBOFF THAT PATTIR HAD UNOFFICIALLY ADMITTED TO HIM THAT THE STORY WAS ACCURATE AND THAT THE OFFICIAL DISCLAIMER WAS INTENDED TO SALVE SHARON'S BRUISED EGO.

3. COMMENT: THE SIGNIFICANCE IN THIS SHIFT IN RESPONSIBILITY FOR SETTLEMENT AFFAIRS IS THAT BEGIN IS NOW THE ONE WHO WILL BE CALLING THE SHOTS ON THIS ISSUE. PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE TO THE US HE HAD PROMISED TO TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO AVOID FUTURE INTER-MINISTERIAL SQUABBLES OVER SETTLEMENT POLICY (REF B). THIS SHIFT IN DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY IS HIS APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM. WE SHALL BE COMMENTING FURTHER ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS DEVELOPMENT IN A FUTURE MESSAGE.

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4. LITANI ALSO NOTED THAT THE MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE MET YESTERDAY AND APPROVED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF 14 NEW SETTLEMENTS WITHIN THE GREEN LINE (EIGHT IN CENTRAL GALILEE AND FOUR IN THE NEGEV).

5. IN AN ACCOMPANYING ARTICLE, LITANI QUOTED AN "AUTHORITATIVE GOVERNMENT SOURCE" (WHO LITANI IDENTIFIED TO AN EMBOFF AS A HIGH-RANKING CIVILIAN IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE) AS STATING THAT 14,000 ISRAELIS ARE NOW LIVING IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THIS INCLUDED 4,750 ON THE WEST BANK (GUSH ETZION - QNTTPV KIRYAT ARBA - 1,700 AND THE JORDAN VALLEY - 1,500);
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2,600 IN THE RAFAH APPROACHES; 1,100 IN SOUTHERN SINAI AND 4,000 ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. (COMMENT: THESE FIGURES APPEAR HIGH TO US. END COMMENT)

6. AS CONGEN JERUSALEM REPORTED BY SEPTTEL, GROUND WORK AT NABI SALAH HAS BEGUN. SHIMON RAVID OF THE

JEWISH AGENCY SETTLEMENT DEPARTMENT TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT THE GROUND WORK FOR ABOUT 30 HOMES IS BEING CARRIED OUT ON STATE-OWNED LAND AT NABI SALAH. HE ADDED THAT THE FREEZE ON NEW SETTLEMENTS REMAINS IN EFFECT, BUT THAT WORK ON EXISTING SETTLEMENTS IS CONTINUING. REGARDING A REPORT ON ISRAELI TELEVISION THAT ANOTHER 270 FAMILIES ARE SCHEDULED TO MOVE TO NORTHERN SINAI THIS SUMMER, RAVID SAID THAT EXISTING SETTLEMENTS WILL BE ABSORBING A NUMBER OF NEW SETTLERS, BUT THIS FIGURE SEEMED HIGH TO HIM. (COMMENT: WHEN ONE INCLUDES THE HOUSING UNITS WHICH WILL SOON BE READY AT YAMIT AND THE HOMES IN RAFAH APPROACHES SETTLEMENTS WHICH ARE IN THE FINAL STAGES OF COMPLETION, THE FIGURE OF 270 FAMILIES SEEMS REASONABLE. END COMMENT.)

7. WASHINGTON BASED CORRESPONDENTS OF THE ISRAELI PRESS HAVE REPORTED ADMINISTRATION CONCERN OVER CONTINUING SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY BEYOND THE GREEN LINE. HAARETZ (MARCUS) QUOTES "US ADMINISTRATION CIRCLES" AS REACTING WITH DISMAY TO THE ABOVE-MENTIONED REPORT OF ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENT IN THE YAMIT AREA. MARCUS NOTED THAT THESE "CIRCLES" TERMED THIS ACTIVITY A VIOLATION OF THE EXPLICIT UNDERTAKING GIVEN BY THE ISRAEL GOVERNMENT ON FEB 26 CONCERNING SETTLEMENT IN SINAI. THE JERUSALEM POST (BLITZER) CARRIED A SIMILAR STORY BUT ADDED THE EMBASSY IN TEL AVIV HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEEN ASKED TO CLARIFY REPORTS THAT ISRAEL IS GOING AHEAD WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF NABI SALAH. LEWIS

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